

“I WOULD—BUT YE WOULD NOT”
NO. 2381

A SERMON
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*“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee,
how often would I have gathered thy children together,
even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”*
Matthew 23:37

THIS is not and could not be the language of a mere man. It would be utterly absurd for any man to say that he would have gathered the inhabitants of a city together, “even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.” Besides, the language implies that for many centuries, by the sending of the prophets, and by many other warnings, God would often have gathered the children of Jerusalem together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings.

Now, Christ could not have said that, throughout those ages He would have gathered those people, if He had been only a man. If His life began at Bethlehem this would be an absurd statement, but as the Son of God, ever loving the sons of men, ever desirous the good of Israel, He could say that in sending the prophets, even though they were stoned and killed, He had again and again, shown His desire to bless His people till He could truly say, “How often would I have gathered your children together!”

Some who have found difficulties in this lament have said that it was the language of Christ as Man. I beg to put in a very decided negative to that, it is and it must be, the utterance of the Son of man, the Son of God, the Christ in His complex person as human and divine. I am not going into any of the difficulties just now, but you could not fully understand this passage from any point of view, unless you believed it to be the language of one who was both God and man.

This verse shows also that the ruin of men lies with themselves. Christ puts it very plainly, “*I would; but ye would not.*” “How often would I have gathered your children together, and ye would not!” That is a truth, about which, I hope, we have never had any question, we hold tenaciously that salvation is all of grace, but we also believe with equal firmness that the ruin of man is entirely the result of His own sin.

It is the will of God that saves, it is the will of man that damns. Jerusalem stands and is preserved by the grace and favor of the Most High, but Jerusalem is burnt, and her stones are cast down, through the transgression and iniquity of men who provoked the justice of God.

There are great deeps about these two points, but I have not been accustomed to lead you into any deeps, and I am not going to do so at this time. The practical part of theology is that which it is most important for us to understand. Any man may get himself into a terrible labyrinth who thinks continually of the sovereignty of God alone, and He may equally get into deeps that are likely to drown him if he meditates only on the free will of man. The best thing is to take what God reveals to you and to believe that.

If God’s Word leads me to the right, I go there, if it leads me to the left, I go there, if it makes me stand still, I stand still. If you so act, you will be safe, but if you try to be wise above that which is written, and to understand that which even angels do not comprehend, you will certainly befog yourself. I desire ever to bring before you practical rather than mysterious subjects, and our present theme is one that concerns us all.

The great destroyer of man is the will of man. I do not believe that man’s free will has ever saved a soul, but man’s free will has been the ruin of multitudes. “Ye would not,” is still the solemn accusation

of Christ against guilty men. Did He not say, at another time, “Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life”? The human will is desperately set against God, and is the great devourer and destroyer of thousands of good intentions and emotions, which never come to anything permanent because the will is acting in opposition to that which is right and true.

That, I think, is the very marrow of the text, and I am going to handle it in this fashion.

I. First, consider from the very condescending emblem used by our Lord, WHAT GOD IS TO THOSE WHO COME TO HIM.

He gathers them, “as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings.” Let us dwell upon that thought for a few minutes. It is a very marvelous thing that God should condescend to be compared to a hen, that the Christ, the Son of the Highest, the Savior of men, should stoop to so homely a piece of imagery as to liken Himself to a hen. There must be something very instructive in this metaphor, or our Lord would not have used it in such a connection.

Those of you who have been gathered unto Christ know first, that *by this wonderful Gatherer, you have been gathered into happy association*. The chickens, beneath the wings of the hen, look very happy all crowded together. What a sweet little family party they are! How they hide themselves away in great contentment, and chirp their little note of joy!

You, dear friends, who have never been converted, find very noisy fellowship I am afraid, in this world, you do not get much companionship that helps you, blesses you, gives you rest of mind, but if you had been gathered to the Lord’s Christ, you would have found that there are many sweetnesses in this life in being beneath the wings of the Most High. He who comes to Christ finds father, and mother, and sister, and brother, he finds many dear and kind friends who are themselves connected with Christ, and who therefore love those who are joined to Him.

Among the greatest happinesses of my life, certainly, I put down Christian fellowship, and I think that many, who have come from the country to London have for a long time missed much of this fellowship till, at last, they have fallen in with Christian people, and they have found themselves happy again.

O lonely sinner, you who come in and out of this place and say, “Nobody seems to care about me,” if you will come to Christ, and join with the church which is gathered beneath His wings, you will soon find happy fellowship!

I remember that in the times of persecution, one of the saints said that he had lost his father and his mother by being driven away from his native country, but he said, “I have found a hundred fathers, and a hundred mothers, for into whatsoever Christian house I have gone, I have been looked upon with so much kindness by those who have received me as an exile from my native land, that everyone has seemed to be a father and a mother to me.” If you come to Christ, I feel persuaded that He will introduce you to many people who will give you happy fellowship!

But that is merely the beginning. A hen is to her little chicks, next, a cover of safety. There is a hawk in the sky, the mother bird can see it, though the chickens cannot. She gives her peculiar cluck of warning, and quickly they come and hide beneath her wings. The hawk will not hurt them now, beneath her wings they are secure.

This is what God is to those who come to Him by Jesus Christ, *He is the Giver of safety*. “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shall thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.” Even the attraction of your old sins, or the danger of future temptations, thou shalt be preserved from all these perils when thou comest to Christ, and thus hidest away under Him.

The figure our Lord used is full of meaning, for in the next place, the hen is to her chicks *the source of comfort*. It is a cold night, and they would be frozen if they remained outside, but she calls them in, and when they are under her wings, they derive warmth from their mother’s breast. It is wonderful, the care of a hen for her little ones, she will sit so carefully and keep her wings so widely spread, that they may all be housed.

What a cabin, what a palace it is for the young chicks to get there under the mother’s wings! The snow may fall, or the rain may come pelting down, but the wings of the hen protect the chicks, and you, dear friend, if you come to Christ, shall not only have safety, but comfort.

I speak what I have experienced. There is a deep, sweet comfort about hiding yourself away in God, for when troubles come, wave upon wave, blessed is the man who has a God to give him mercy upon mercy. When affliction comes, or bereavement comes, when loss of property comes, when sickness comes in your own body, there is nothing wanted but your God. Ten thousand things, apart from Him, cannot satisfy you, or give you comfort. There, let them all go, but if God be yours and you hide away under His wings, you are as happy in Him as the chickens are beneath the hen.

Then, the hen is also to her chicks, *the fountain of love*. She loves them, did you ever see a hen fight for her chickens? She is a timid enough creature at any other time, but there is no timidity when her chicks are in danger. What an affection she has for them, not for all chicks, for I have known her kill the chickens of another brood, but for her own what love she has! Her heart is all devoted to them.

But oh, if you want to know the true fountain of love, you must come to Christ! You will never have to say, “Nobody loves me, I am pining, with an aching heart, for a love that can fill and satisfy it.” The love of Jesus fills to overflowing the heart of man, and makes him well content under all circumstances. I would that God had gathered you all, my dear hearers. I know that He has gathered many of you, blessed be His name, but still there are some here, chicks without a hen, sinners without a Savior, men, women, and children, who have never been reconciled to God.

The hen is also to her chicks, *the cherisher of growth*. They would not develop if they were not taken care of, in their weakness they need to be cherished that they may come to the fullness of their perfection. And when the child of God lives near to Christ, and hides beneath His wings, how fast he grows! There is no advancing from grace to grace, from feeble faith to strong faith, and from little fervency to great fervency, except by getting near to God.

The emblem used by our Lord is a far more instructive figure than I have time to explain. When the Lord gathers sinners to Himself, then it is that they find in Him all that the chicks find in the hen, and infinitely more.

II. Now notice, secondly, WHAT GOD DOES TO GATHER MEN. They are straying, and wandering about, but He gathers them. According to the text, Jesus says, “How often would I have gathered thy children together!” How did God gather those of us who have come to Him?

He gathers us first *by making Himself known to us*. When we come to understand who He is and what He is, and know something of His love, and tenderness, and greatness, *then* we come to Him. Ignorance keeps us away from Him, but to know God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is eternal life. Hence I diligently urge you to study the Scriptures, and to be as often as you can hearing a faithful preacher of the Gospel, that, knowing the Lord, you may by that knowledge be drawn towards Him.

These are the cords of love with which the Spirit of God draws men to Christ. He makes Christ known to us, He shows us Christ in the grandeur of His divine and human nature, Christ in the humiliation of His sufferings, Christ in the glory of His resurrection, Christ in the love of His heart, in the power of His arm, in the efficacy of His plea, in the virtue of His blood, and as we learn these sacred lessons we say, “That is the Christ for me, that is the God for me,” and we are gathered unto Him.

But God gathers many to Himself *by the call of His servants*. You see that of old, He sent His prophets, now He sends His ministers. If God does not send us to you, we shall never gather you. If we come to you in our own name, we shall come in vain, but if the Lord has sent us then He will bless us and our message will be made to you a means of gathering you to Christ.

I would much rather cease to preach than be allowed to go on preaching but never to gather souls to God. I can truly say that I have no wish to say a pretty thing, or turn a period, or utter a nice figure of speech, I want to win your souls, to slay your sin, to do practical work for God with each man, each woman, each child, who shall come into this Tabernacle, and I ask the prayers of God’s people that it

may be so. It is thus that God gathers men to Himself, by the message which He gives to them through His servants.

The Lord has also *many other ways of calling men to Himself*. You saw this morning [Sermon #2034, Peter's Restoration], that Peter was called to repentance by the crowing of a cock, and the Lord can use a great many means of bringing sinners to Himself. Omnipotence has servants everywhere, and God can use every kind of agent, even though it appears most unsuitable, to gather together His own chosen ones. He has called some of you, He has called some of you who have not yet come to Him. The text says, “How often!” It does not tell us how often, but it puts it as a matter of wonder, “How often!” with a note of exclamation.

Let me ask you how often has God called some of you? Conscience has whispered its message to the most of you. When you come to see men dying, if you talk seriously with them, they will sometimes tell you that they are unprepared, but that they have often had tremblings and been suspicions, they have long suffered from unrest, and sometimes they have been, “almost persuaded.” I should not think that there is a person in this place who has not been sometimes made to shake and tremble at the thought of the world to come. How often has it been so with you? “How often,” says God, “would I have gathered you!”

The Lord sometimes speaks to us, not so much by conscience, as by providence. That death in the family, what a voice it was to us! When your mother died, when your poor father passed away, what a gathering time it seemed to be then! You soon forgot all about it, but you did feel it then. Ah, my dear woman, when your babe was taken from your bosom, and the little coffin left the house, you remember how you felt, and you, father, when your prattling boy sang the Sunday school hymn to you on his dying bed, and well-nigh broke your heart, then was the Lord going forth in His providence to gather you. You were being gathered, but you were not willing to come, according to our text you “would not.”

It has not always been by death that the Lord has spoken to you, for you have had other calls. When you have been brought low, or have been out of a situation, when sometimes a Christian friend has spoken to you, when you have read something in a tract or paper, which has compelled you to pull up and made you stand aghast for a while, has not all that had a reference to this text, “How often, how often, how often would I have gathered thee?”

God knocks many times at some men's doors. I know that there is a call of His which is effectual, oh, that you might hear it! But there are many other calls which come to men, of whom Christ says, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” How often has He called *you*? I wish you would try and reckon up how often the Almighty God has come to you, and spread out His warm wide wings, and yet this has been true, “I would have gathered you, but you would not.”

One more way in which God gathers men is *by continuing to have patience with them, and sending the same message to them*. I am always afraid that you who hear me constantly will get to feel, “We have heard him so long and so often that he cannot say anything fresh.” Why, did I not use to shake you, when first you heard me, and compel you to shed many tears in the early days of your coming to this house?

And now—well, you can hear it all without a tremor—you are like the blacksmith's dog that goes to sleep while the sparks are flying from the anvil. Down in Southwark, at the place where they make the big boilers, a man has to get inside to hold the hammer while they are riveting. There is an awful noise, the first time that a man goes in he feels that he cannot stand it, and that he will die, he loses his hearing, it is such a terrible din, but they tell me that after a while some have been known even to go to sleep while the men have been hammering.

So it is in hearing the Gospel, men grow hardened and that which was at one time a very powerful call, seems to be at the last no call at all. Yet still, here you are and your hair is getting grey, here you are, you have long passed the prime of life, here you are, you were in a shipwreck once, or you had an accident, or you caught the fever, but you did not die, and here you are, God still speaks to you, not saying, “Go,” but “Come, come.” Christ has not yet said to you, “Depart, ye cursed,” but He still cries,

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This is how God calls and how He gathers men by the pertinacity of His infinite compassion, in still inviting them to come unto Him that they may obtain eternal life.

III. Well now, a third point, and a very important one is this, WHAT MEN NEED TO MAKE THEM COME TO GOD.

According to the text, God gathers men, but what is needed on their part? Our Savior said of those that rejected him, “Ye would not.”

What is wanted is first, *the real will to come to God*. You have heard a great deal I dare say, about the wonderful faculty of free will. I have already told you my opinion of free will, but it also happens that that is the very thing that is wanted, a will towards that which is good. There is where the sinner fails, what he needs is a real will. “Oh, yes!” men say, “we are willing, we are willing.” But you are not willing, if we can get the real truth, you are not willing, there is no true willingness in your hearts, for a true willingness is a *practical willingness*. The man who is willing to come to Christ says, “I must away with my sins, I must do away with my self-righteousness, and I must seek Him who alone can save me.”

Men talk about being willing to be saved, and dispute about free will, but when it comes to actual practice, they are not willing. They have no heart to repent, they will to keep on with their sin. They will to continue in their self-righteousness, but they do not will, with any practical resolve, to come to Christ.

There is need of an *immediate will*. Every unconverted person here is willing to come to Christ before he dies, I never met with a person yet who was not, but are you willing to come to Christ now? That is the point. “Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” But you answer, “Our hearts are not hardened, we only ask for a little more time.” A little more time for what? A little more time in which to go on rebelling against God? A little more time in which to run the awful risk of eternal destruction?

So, you see, it is a real will and an immediate will that is needed.

With some, it is a *settled will* that is needed. Oh, yes, they are ready! They feel directly the preacher begins to speak, they are impressed during the singing of the first hymn. There is a revival service, and in the after-meeting they begin telling you what they have felt.

Look at those people on Wednesday. They have got over Monday and Tuesday with some little grumblings of heart, but what about Wednesday? They are as cold as a cucumber, every feeling that they had on Sunday is gone from them, they have no memory of it whatever. Their goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it passes away. How some people do deceive us with their good resolves, in which there is nothing at all, for there is no settled will!

With others, what is lacking is a *submissive will*. Yes, they are willing to be saved, but then they do not want to be saved by grace, they are not willing to give themselves up altogether to the Savior, they will not renounce their own righteousness, and submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ. Well, that practically means that there is not any willingness at all, for unless you accept God’s way of salvation, it is no use for you to talk about your will. Here is the great evil that is destroying you, and that will destroy you before long, and land you in hell, “Ye would not, ye would not.” Oh, that God’s grace might come upon you, subduing and renewing your will, and making you willing in the day of His power!

IV. My last point is a very solemn one. I shall not weary you with it. WHAT WILL BECOME OF MEN WHO ARE NOT GATHERED TO CHRIST?

What will become of men of whom it continues to be said, “Ye would not?”

The text suggests to us two ways of answering the question. *What becomes of chicks that do not come to the shelter of the hen’s wings?* What becomes of chicks that are not gathered to the hen? Well, the hawk devours some, and the cold nips others, they miss the warmth and comfort that they might have had. That is something.

If there were no hereafter, I should like to be a Christian. If I had to die like a dog, the joy I find in Christ would make me wish to be His follower. You are losers in this world if you love not God, you are

losers of peace, and comfort, and strength, and hope, even now, but what will be your loss hereafter, with no wing to cover you when the destroying angel is abroad, no feathers beneath which you may hide when the dread thunderbolts of justice shall be launched, one after another, from God’s right hand? You have no shelter, and consequently no safety.

*“He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode,”*

but he who has not that refuge shall be among the great multitude who will call to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. O sirs, I pray you, run not the awful risk of attempting to live without the shelter of God in Christ Jesus!

But the text suggests a second question, *What became of Jerusalem in the end?* “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, but ye would not!” Well, what happened to Jerusalem, after all? I invite you who are without God, and without Christ, to read Josephus, with the hope that he may be of service to you.

What became of the inhabitants of that guilty city of Jerusalem? Well, they crucified the Lord of glory, and they hunted out His disciples, and yet they said to themselves, “We live in the city of God, no harm can come to us, we have the temple within our walls, and God will guard His own Holy Place.” But very soon they tried to throw off the Roman yoke and there were different sets of zealots who determined to fight against the Romans, and they murmured and complained, and began to fight among themselves.

Before the Romans attacked Jerusalem, the inhabitants had begun to kill one another. The city was divided by the various factions, three parties took possession of different portions of the place, and they fought against one another, night and day. This is what happens to ungodly men, manhood breaks loose against itself, and when there are inward contentions, one part of man’s soul fighting against another part, there is an internal war of the most horrible kind. What is the poor wretch to do who is at enmity with himself, one part of his nature saying, “Go,” another part crying, “Go back,” and yet a third part shouting, “Stop where you are”?

Are there not many of you who are just like battle fields trampled with the hoofs of horses, torn up with the ruts made by the cannon wheels, and stained with blood? Many a man’s heart is just like that. “Rest?” he says, “that has gone from me long ago.” Look at him in the morning after a drinking bout, look at him after he has been quarrelling with everybody, look at the man who has been unfaithful to his wife, or that other man who has been dishonest to his employer, or that other who is gambling away all that he has.

Why, how does he sleep, poor wretch? He does not rest, he dreams, he starts, he is always in terror. I would not change places with him, nay, not for five minutes. The depths of poverty, and an honest conscience, are immeasurably superior to the greatest luxury in the midst of sin. The man who is evidently without God begins to quarrel with himself.

By and by, one morning, they who looked over the battlements of Jerusalem cried, “The Romans are coming, in very deed they are marching up towards the city!” Vespasian came with an army of sixty thousand men, and after a while, Titus had thrown up mounds round about the city so that no one could come in or go out of it. He had surrounded it so completely that they were all shut in. It was, as you remember, at the time of the passover, when the people had come from every part of the land, a million and more of them, and he shut them all up in that little city.

So, a time comes with guilty men, when they are shut up, this sometimes happens before they die, they are shut up, they cannot have any pleasure in sin as they used to have, and they have no hope. They seem cooped up altogether, they have not been gathered by God’s love, but now, at last, they are gathered by an avenging conscience, they are shut up in God’s justice.

I shall never forget being sent for in my early days, to see a man who was dying. As I entered the room, he greeted me with an oath, I was only a youth, a pastor about seventeen and a half years of age, and he somewhat staggered me. He would not lie down on his bed, he defied God, he said he would not die.

“Shall I pray for you?” I asked. I knelt down, and I had not uttered many sentences before he cursed me in such dreadful language that I started to my feet, and then again he cried, and begged me to pray with him again, though it was not any good. He said, “It is no use, your prayer will never be heard for me, I am damned already,” and the poor wretch spoke as though he really were so, and were realizing it in his own soul.

I tried to persuade him to lie down upon his bed, it was of no avail, he tramped up and down the room as fast as he could go, he knew that he should die, but he could not die while he could keep on walking, and so he kept on. Then again I must pray with him, and then would come another awful burst of blasphemy, because it was not possible that the prayer would be heard.

It does not often happen that one sees a person quite as bad as that, but there is a condition of heart that is not so visible, but which is quite as sad, and which comes to men dying without Christ. They are shut up, the Roman soldiers are, as it were, marching all round the city, and there is no escape, and they begin to feel it, and so they die in despair.

But then, when the Roman soldiers did come, the woes of Jerusalem did not end. There was a famine in the city, a famine so dreadful that what Moses said was fulfilled, and the tender and delicate women ate the fruit of her own body. They came to search the houses because they thought there was food there, and a woman brought out half of her own babe and said, “Well, eat that, if you can,” and throughout the city, they fed upon one another, and oh, when there is no God in the heart, what a famine it makes in a man’s soul! How he longs for a something which he cannot find, and that all the world cannot give him, even a mouthful to stay the ravenousness of his spirit’s hunger!

And this doom will be still worse in the next world. You know that Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, not one stone was left upon another, and this is what is to happen to you if you refuse your Savior, you will be destroyed, you will be an eternal ruin, no temple of God, but an everlasting ruin. Destroyed—that is the punishment for you, destroyed from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power, and so, abiding forever with no indwelling God, no hope, no comfort. How terrible will be your doom unless you repent!

*“Ye sinners, seek His grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find salvation there.”*

I pray you, do so, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 23:29-39 AND 24:1-21

Matthew Chapter 23. Verses 29-31. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.*

They talk in the same conceited manner and they claim self-righteousness as their fathers did, and if their ancestors killed the prophets, these men garnish their sepulchres, and so are sharers in their forefathers’ deeds. How often it happens that men say they would not have done such crimes as others have committed, whereas they do not know the vileness of their own hearts. If they were under the same

conditions as others, they would act in the same way. It would have been a better sign if the scribes and Pharisees had lamented before God that they themselves were not treating His prophets as they ought to be treated.

How very faithful was our Master! He was very tender in spirit, but still, He spoke very severely. The old proverb says that, “a good surgeon often cuts deeply,” and so it was with the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not flinch the evil matter over, He lanced the wound. He is not the most loving who speaks the smoothest words, true love often compels an honest man to say that which pains him far more than it affects his callous hearers.

32-33. *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

This is Christ’s utterance, let me remind you. Our modern preachers would not talk like this, even to scribes and Pharisees who were crucifying Christ afresh, and putting Him to an open shame. They would search the dictionary through to find very smooth and pretty words to say to Christ’s enemies. We are not of their way of thinking and speaking, nor shall we be while we desire to follow in the footsteps of our Lord.

34. *Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.*

Which they did, the servants of Christ were thus worried and harried all over the land.

35-36. *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.*

So they did. The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world had ever witnessed, either before or since. There must have been nearly a million and a quarter of people killed during that terrible siege, and even Titus, when he saw the awful carnage said, “What must be the folly of this people that they drive me to such work as this? Surely, the hand of an avenging God must be in it.” Truly, the blood of the martyrs slain in Jerusalem was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood.

37-38. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

What a picture of pity and disappointed love the King’s face must have presented, when with flowing tears, He spoke these words! It was the utterance of the righteous Judge, choked with emotion. Jerusalem was too far gone to be rescued from its self-sought doom, and its guilt was about to culminate in the death of the Son of God.

39. *For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

Matthew Chapter 24. Verse 1. *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.*

Ah, me! the rejected King took but slight interest in the temple of which His disciples thought so much. To them the appearance was glorious, but to their Lord it was a sad sight. His Father’s house, which ought to have been a house of prayer for all nations, had become a den of thieves, and soon would be utterly destroyed.

2. *And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

And it was so. Josephus tells us that Titus at first tried to save the temple, even after it was set on fire, but his efforts were of no avail, and at last he gave orders that the whole city and temple should be leveled, except a small portion reserved for the garrison. Yet the stones of the temple were such as men

very seldom see, so exceedingly great, they looked as if, once in their place, they would stand there throughout eternity, but all are gone, according to our Lord’s prophecy.

3. *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives,—*

The little procession continued ascending the Mount of Olives, until Jesus reached a resting place from which He could see the temple.

3. *The disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

There are here two distinct questions, perhaps three. The disciples inquired, first, about the time of the destruction of the temple, and then about the sign of Christ’s coming, and of “the consummation of the age,” as it is in the margin of the Revised Version. The answers of Jesus contained much that was mysterious, and that could only be fully understood as that which He foretold actually occurred. He told His disciples some things which related to the siege of Jerusalem, some which concerned His second advent, and some which would immediately precede “the end of the world.”

When we have clearer light, we may possibly perceive that all our Savior’s predictions on this memorable occasion had some connection with all three of these great events.

4. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.*

Jesus was always practical. The most important thing for His disciples was not that they might know when “these things,” would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time.

5. *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

And they did. A large number of impostors came forward before the destruction of Jerusalem, proclaiming that they were Messiahs.

6. *And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars:*

And they did. The armies of Rome were soon after this on their way to the doomed city.

6-8. *See that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

One would think that there was sorrow enough in famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places, but our Lord said that all these were only “the beginning of sorrows”—the first birth-pangs of the travail that must precede His coming, either to Jerusalem or to the whole world.

9-14. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

But as for this destruction of Jerusalem, the Savior gave them clear warning.

15-16. *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the Holy Place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:*

As soon as Christ’s disciples saw “the abomination of desolation,” that is, the Roman ensigns, with their idolatrous emblems, stand in the holy place, they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived and they did “flee into the mountains.”

You will say to me perhaps, “but there were Romans there before.” Yes, the Romans were in possession, but the eagles and other idolatrous symbols were never exhibited in Jerusalem. The Romans were often very lenient to the different people whom they subdued, and these symbols were kept out of sight until the last war came. Then wherever the Jews and Christians looked, and they could see those various images of Caesar and of the Roman state which were worshipped by the soldiery, and then were the faithful to flee to the mountains.

It is a remarkable fact that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem, the followers of Christ fled away to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the unbelieving Jews.

17-18. *Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*

They were to flee in all haste the moment they saw the Roman standards,

19-21. *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

You and I would have believed that all this came true without any confirmation from outside history, but it was very remarkable that God should raise up the Jew Josephus, and put it into his mind to write a record of the siege of Jerusalem, which curdles the blood of everyone who reads it, and exactly bears out the statement of the Master that there was to be “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—417, 265, 612

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